

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 251107

FOLLOWING REPEAT KARACHI 2221 ACTION INFO ISLAMABAD LAHORE
SECSTATE DATED 11/12/74.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 2221

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, SOCI, PK

SUBJECT: LIQUOR DEATHS RAISE DEMANDS FOR TIGHTER LIQUOR/DRUG
CONTROLS

SUMMARY: WIDESPREAD USE OF POISONOUS ILLEGAL LIQUOR IN
EARLY NOVEMBER RESULTED IN NUMEROUS DEATHS IN KARACHI AND
RESULTING PUBLIC OUTRAGE RAISED DEATH EPIDEMIC TO POLITICAL
ISSUE. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ORDERED CRACKDOWN IN ILLEGAL
LIQUOR AND NARCOTICS OPERATIONS AND INSTITUTED ENQUIRY INTO
MATTER. AVAILABLE INFORMATION INDICATES EXCISE DEPARTMENT
PERSONNEL SERIOUSLY INVOLVED IN SCANDAL. LONG RANGE RESULT
MAY BENEFIT USG INTEREST IN ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS SINCE
LIQUOR AND NARCOTICS TREATED AS IDENTICAL PROBLEMS AND
COVERED BY SAME LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.
END SUMMARY.

1. EPIDEMIC OF DEATHS IN WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS OF
KARACHI BEGAN IN EARLY NOVEMBER AND OVER PAST WEEK HAS
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INCREASED TO SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS. LATEST PRESS REPORTS

INDICATE 60'90 DEATHS DUE TO CONSUMPTION OF POISONOUS LIQUOR. (RUMORS HAVE BEEN HEARD PLACING DEATH TOLL AS HIGH AS 400.) MANY OTHER VICTIMS HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY BLINDED OR SUFFERED IRREVERSIBLE BRAIN DAMAGE. IRONICALLY, THE USE OF POISONOUS SUBSTANCES IN THE ILLICIT LIQUOR WAS CAUSED BY AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THIS TRADE BY STEMMING DIVERSION OF RECTIFIED (POTABLE) SPIRITS TO THE ILLICIT OPERATORS.

2. AS EPIDEMIC INCREASED IN PAST WEEK AND PUBLICITY GREW, ISSUE LED TO WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF LETHARGIC ATTITUDE BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS. EXCISE DEPARTMENT AND NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD WERE ACCUSED OF ACTUAL COMPLICITY IN MANUFACTURE OF "POISONOUS LIQUOR". LARGE SCALE POLICE RAIDS IN VARIOUS AREAS OF KARACHI BEGINNING NOV 4, RESULTED IN DETENTION OF A REPORTED 175 PERSONS BY NOV 11. SIND CHIEF MINISTER JATOI ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL ONE-MAN TRIBUNAL (A KARACHI SESSIONS JUDGE) TO INVESTIGATE ALL ASPECTS OF THESE AFFAIRS, INCLUDING POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF HIGH OFFICIALS, AND THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY HAS PROMISED STRONG LEGISLATION TO CONTROL NARCOTICS AND LIQUOR PEDDLERS. JATOI PRESENTED TO THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY NOV 11, A NINE POINT ACTION PLAN INCLUDING CREATION OF SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SQUADS, ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL REHABILITATION CLINICS FOR LIQUOR AND DRUG ADDICTS, FORMATION OF A COMMITTEE HEADED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER TO SUPERVISE PROGRESS IN ANTI-NARCOTICS AND LIQUOR EFFORTS, AND INTENDED NEW LEGISLATION. IN ADDITION HE ANNOUNCED THE SUSPENSION OF 45 HIGH AND MIDDLE-LEVEL NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS. JATOI ALSO CALLED ATTENTION TO VARIOUS MPA'S INCLUDING TWO OF THE PPP'S WHO HAVE HAD CLOSE TIES WITH NARCOTICS AND LIQUOR DEALERS BUT WHO ARE NOW CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO CHECK THE MENACE OF ILLEGAL COUNTRY LIQUOR. WHILE ADMITTING THAT EPIDEMIC HAS BEEN TRAGIC, JATOI DEBUNKED PRESS REPORTS AND RUMORS, OF CLAIMING ONLY 27 FATALITIES TO DATE.

3. EX-SIND CHIEF MINISTER, AND NOW FEDERAL MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO, JOINED THOSE CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HANDLING OF THE MATTER. MUMTAZ, CONFIDENTIAL

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OBVIOUSLY SEIZING ON THIS OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER EMBARRASS HIS SUCCESSOR AS SIND CHIEF MINISTER JATOI, CLAIMED THAT HE HAD WARNED THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION IN THE PAST AND HAD HIS WARNINGS BEEN HEEDED, THE TRAGIC EPIDEMIC WOULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. MUMTAZ JOINED OTHERS IN ALLEGING COMPLICITY OF HIGH RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

4. PRESS REPORTS IN PAST WEEKS HAVE INCLUDED FREQUENT CRITICISMS OF EXCISE DEPARTMENT AND ALLEGATIONS OF COMPLICITY OF VARIOUS ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS. DETAILED ARTICLE NOV 7 DESCRIBED EXISTANCE OF FIVE DIFFERENT GROUPS, MADE UP OF THE STAFF OF EXCISE DEPARTMENT AND THE NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD, RESPONSIBLE FOR ILLEGAL LIQUOR OPERATIONS IN VARIOUS WORKING CLASS AREAS OF KARACHI. THESE GROUPS ALLEGEDLY MANUFACTURE LIQUOR AND SUPPLY RETAIL DENS FOR DISTRIBUTION. PRESS REPORTED SAME DAY SIX EXCISE POLICEMEN BEING DETAINED UNDER DPR FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN ILLICIT LIQUOR TRADE. CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANT OF DEA SAIC CONFIRMED WIDESPREAD INVOLVEMENT BY EXCISE DEPARTMENT AGENTS AND ALSO POINTED FINGER AT HIGH OFFICIAL IN SIND NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD. MOST DISTURBING, SAME INFORMANT TOLD SAIC AS EARLY AS OCT 16 THAT A "BAD" BATCH OF LIQUOR WAS COMING ON MARKET. THIS SUGGESTS THAT MANUFACTURERS KNEW IN ADVANCE OF POSSIBLE DANGEROUS EFFECTS OF LIQUOR.

5. COMMENT: EPIDEMIC OF GRUESOME DEATHS AND BLINDINGS RESULTING FROM POISONOUS LIQUOR AND PUBLICITY CONCERNING EFFORTS MAY IN LONG RUN REDOUND TO BENEFIT OF U.S. GOVT. POLICY. ILLEGAL LIQUOR AND NARCOTICS INCLUDING MARIJUANA, HASHISH AND OPIUM ARE ALL CONSIDERED IDENTICAL TRANSGRESSIONS BY KARACHI PUBLIC. DEMANDS FOR INCREASED VIGILANCE AND STRONGER LAW ENFORCEMENT ETC. COULD STRENGTHEN HAND OF ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN DEALING NOT ONLY WITH STREET PEDDLERS, BUT ALSO LARGE-SCALE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. IN ADDITION, CURRENT PURGE OF CORRUPT OFFICIALS IN ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WHICH MAY RESULT FROM EPIDEMIC COULD ALSO BE BENEFICIAL, DEPENDING, OF COURSE, ON QUALITY OF PERSONNEL CHOSEN AS REPLACEMENT. THIS SORDID AFFAIR HAS ALREADY HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF

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THE ILLICIT LIQUOR PROBLEM AND IS FOCUSSED MORE PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL ATTENTION THAN EVER BEFORE ON THE RELATED PROBLEM OF DRUG ADDICTION, POSSIBLY LEADING TO SOMETHING REALLY CONCRETE IN THE WAY OF LEGISLATION AND CONTROL.
TIGER UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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